

# OUR SAFARI IN MIGRATING FROM UNIVERSAL DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION (UDC) TO LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CLASSIFICATION (LC)

**Lucas M. Kilemba**

Librarian

Mombasa Polytechnic University College, Kenya

*7<sup>th</sup> IAMSLIC Conference*

*Zanzibar, Tanzania, October 16-20, 2011*

**Abstract:** This paper will share our experiences in migrating from UDC (Universal Decimal Classification) to LC (Library of Congress) in our Library. At times it was very stressful and occasionally hilarious. Some background information is given to explain the necessity of the decision and the highs and lows during the process. We hope that in sharing our experiences we can learn and get feedback from participants in this Conference. Included is a pictorial record of some activities and challenges. As we move from our hither to traditional library to a modern digital library, we hope to get useful input on the way forward from our distinguished colleagues in this conference.

**Keywords:** Classification; Library of Congress classification; Universal Decimal Classification.

## **A Prayer For Librarians**

- Our chief Librarian at BNB
- Hallowed be thy catalogue,
- Thy issues be increased,
- Thy books be strictly-ordered,
- In fiction as they are in Non-Fiction
- Give us this day our overdue books back,
- And forgive us our Classification Errors,
- As we forgive those who misplace our books
- As they know not thy prophet Dewey
- Lead us not into false subject Headings,
- But deliver us from categorization
- ...and cuts in Opening Hours
- ....and reductions in the Book Fund
- For thine is the Issue System,
- The date stamp
- And the Light Pen
- Forever and Ever
- And the wisdom to know when its time take a break
- Amen! (Sue Marsden - IFLA)

## **Historical Background**

- 1948 – MIOME (Mombasa Institute of Muslim Education)
- 1966 – Mombasa Technical Training Institute.
- 1972 – National Polytechnic (Mombasa Polytechnic)
- 2007 – MPUC (Mombasa Polytechnic University College). Through Legal Notice No. 160 of 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2007



### Trustees

The main purpose of setting MPUC as it is known today was to provide technical education to Muslim children in East Africa. Initially it was set up through donations from the following people:

- Sir Philip Mitchell then Governor, Kenya, £100,000
- H. E. The Sultan of Zanzibar, £100,000.
- The Bohra Community of East Africa, £50,000



*Figure 1. MPUC Library Building*

The MPUC Library is part of the MPUC infrastructure for learning and research. The collection is about 30,000 volumes that are housed in a large one-story building currently undergoing extensions. The readership includes all staff and students, external users and the community around the University as a way of giving back to the community and promoting good neighborliness or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). These users number about 10,000 and are served by about 30 staff.

Since its inception the collection was classified using UDC (Universal Decimal Classification), but this year it was decided to migrate from UDC to the LC (Library of Congress) Classification Scheme. Since UDC is not used by many academic libraries, so it was necessary to change. We needed to conform to certain standards as well. The Commission of Higher Education (CHE) has guidelines and standards for University Libraries.

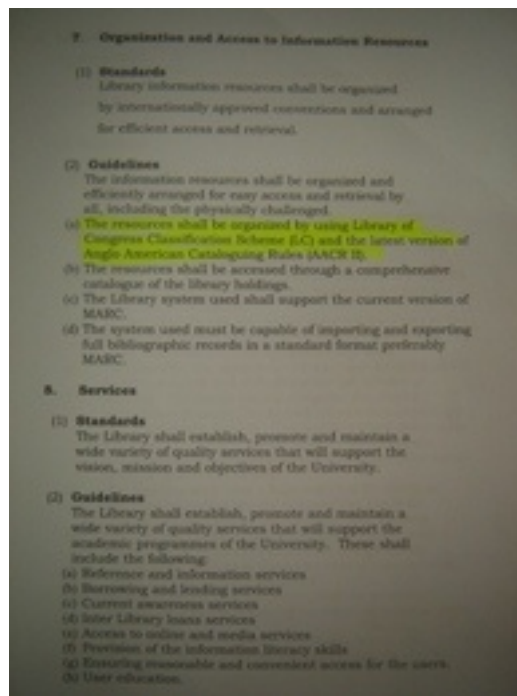
Just like other libraries we have to classify our books so that our readers will be able to find them on the shelves. As we all know classification in its very simple terms means an arrangement of books on shelves- but on its own, it may not be enough. One of the greatest minds in the profession told us in 1931 that every book has its

reader but while shelf arrangement is necessary, it is by no means sufficient to get every book to its reader. The catalogue can be of immense use in this matter.



*Figure 2. Ranganathan*

As a library we also share our resources with other libraries and Information Centres through Inter-Library Loans (ILL) hence, the need to conform to certain standards regionally, internationally etc. The Commission for Higher Education has issued Standards and Guidelines for Academic Libraries so we really had no choice but to change to LC.



*Figure 3. CHE Guidelines.*

With few financial resources (as in most developing countries) this was a very expensive undertaking and perhaps one might ask how we changed from a working scheme (UDC) to a new one (LC) especially since we didn't even have hard copies of the LC schedules. Time management and timelines were a real challenge.

There are many classification schemes and all of them have their advantages and disadvantages. While LC for us was a matter of compliance, it has some advantages as well just like other most widely used universal classification schemes:

- It is flexible - and simply works!
- In the absence of any overwhelming conviction of the superiority of any other classification system over it, one naturally tends to choose the system that saves money and in any case all schemes are good, and necessary so if LC can do the job and its cheaper why not choose it?
- Sometimes library administrators cite “administrative resources’.” which simply means cost differentials in terms of staff time spent and proportions of the budget spent directly on the operations.
- It is now available in machine-readable format and online so we didn't have to wait for the hard copies ordered eons ago.
- It was designed and is used by the largest Library in the world (The Library of Congress) so it must be good!



*Figure 4. The Library of Congress.*

- *It covers all subject areas, which can enable improved browsing and subject searching.*
- *It is widely supported in terms of its development and survival and has been repeatedly revised and updated since its first publication by responsible international bodies.*
- *Regular library users would be familiar with it.*

#### **The Challenges**

- Resistance to change.
- Stringent procedures (Public Procurement Oversight Authority - PPOA), which caused delays in getting even the very basics - e.g. pencils, dust masks, tattle tapes and other (computer) stationery.
- Limited number of PCs (we started with 4), low Internet connectivity and frequent power failures.
- Inadequate professionally trained staff.
- Those who didn't follow instructions carefully or pay attention to detail created a lot of conflict and rejection by other members.

- Wrong data entries which meant a senior member of staff had to go through all of them with a tooth comb.
- Lack of photocopying services in the Library delayed production of data entry forms.
- Environmental Issues
- Re-arrangement of our shelves, to position them in middle of the Hall(s) in order to allow our readers use of natural lighting.
- Manpower verses woman power!



*Figure 5. The Challenges.*



*Figure 6. Shelf arrangement before and after.*

Once it became clear that we had to migrate from UDC to LC in order to meet CHE requirements and timeframes I was surprised at the desire and enthusiasm to “get on with it” and finish! The staff were willing and ready to learn the new system and listened very carefully as they were being taught. I learned a lot from my colleagues during the series of meeting that we held and received many very well thought-out suggestions.





*Figure 7. Staff Listening In a Meeting*

When finally most of the staff understood, I began to notice some positive changes among my colleagues. Encouragement and guidance from the Librarian kept the team spirit going. A visit by the top management of the University College was really the icing on the cake. It made our day.



*Figure 9. MPUC Management Team.*

### **Achievements**

At the end of the exercise and after we repositioned the shelves to make use of natural lighting, all the initial conflicts and disagreements were forgotten. So teamwork finally won and we were rewarded, but most importantly everybody was a winner.

Immediately after the conversation, Ms. Claudine Mwaka gave birth to a baby girl thus a new Librarian thus ensures the Library will live forever! Members of staff are still arguing which name to call her i.e. Conversion Migration or Library of Congress. Suggestions welcome.



*Figure 10. Ms. Claudine Mwaka's daughter.*

After successfully completing this exercise despite very difficult conditions, we won accolades from the Management of the University College. We could win the Department of the Year Award (DOYA) in our internal competitions. Even with limited financial resources we were able to conclude this exercise successfully. On the whole there was moral support from all including management and we all won as a team.

### **Conclusions**

We now need to consider the way forward, as well as whether we could have manage the change differently. We are thinking of transforming our hitherto traditional library to a modern digital Library and we welcome your input and views. I also welcome you to visit MPUC and Mombasa.

### **Acknowledgments**

My acknowledgement to our staff for their cooperation; to the MPUC Management for their support during the exercise and for allowing me to attend this conference as well; to Dr. Marangi as well for his input and encouragement while writing this paper; and to IAMS LIC and C. Wagues for giving me an opportunity to share with you.

### **References**

- Kilemba L. M. et. al. 2011. *Library Department Self assessment Statistics Report Submitted to CHE*. MPUC Library Occasional Papers, Unpublished. Mombasa.
- Koch, Trangott. 1997. *Specification of resource description methods part 3: The role of classification schemes in Internet resource description and discovery*. Lund University Library Occasional Papers. Lund.
- Ranganathan, S. R. 1931. *The five laws of library Science*. Madras Library Association. Madras, India.
- Perrault, Jean M. 1967. *Re-classification*. University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign. Library occasional papers no. 87. Illinois.
- Prospectus: 1951. *MIOME occasional papers*, unpublished Mombasa.